

DCLS News

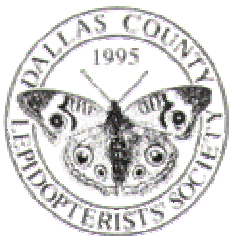
NUMBER 53

DECEMBER, 2003

The Dallas County
Lepidopterists'
Society
Est. 1995

Purpose:
To provide a
forum where
people may gather
who share an
interest in
butterflies
and
moths,
whether that
interest takes the
form of
collecting,
gardening,
photography,
study or
casual
observation.

Admission is free.



Next DCLS Meeting Saturday, Dec. 13th

The next meeting of the Dallas County Lepidopterists' Society will be this coming Saturday, December 13th at 10:00 a.m.. J. and Wanda Rubrecht have graciously invited us to celebrate the holidays at their home with a potluck luncheon. J and Wanda will be supplying the meat portion of the luncheon and attendees are encouraged to bring a salad, casserole, dessert, etc to "fill out the meal". If you're not a cook — don't worry, come anyway. There'll be plenty for everyone.

We'll begin the meeting at 10:00 a.m. with a slide presentation. Members

are also encouraged to bring items for identification (whether specimens, photos, or slides), or any other bits of news to share. We will also start taking suggestions on meeting locations for 2004.

A map to J. and Wanda's home can be found on page four of this newsletter. Their address is: 4237 McAlice Drive, Plano, Texas 75093.

Looking forward to seeing everyone on Saturday. And if you can't make it, have a happy and safe holiday season!

Tailed Orange (*Pyrisitia proterpia*) Seen in Tarrant County

The list of unusual species that have been seen in north Texas continued to grow last month as several sightings of Tailed Orange (*Pyrisitia proterpia*) were reported from Tarrant County, Texas.

Specimens began showing up at the Fort Worth Botanic Gardens in early November and continued throughout the next several weeks. Independent sightings from other locations in Fort

Worth were also reported, one being DCLS member Henry Turner having individuals showing up in his yard on numerous occasions.

This species has been recorded in north Texas in the past from late spring through the fall. It was particularly common this year in the Rio Grande Valley. For more information on this butterfly see the *Spotlight* on page 3.

The Butterfly Garden: The Candlestick Plant

by: Tina Dombrowski

Consider the Candlestick Plant...

As Autumn transitions into Winter in North Texas, it is time to begin seed collections for many favored plant species. The Sennas are one such group in which the seed ripens for 'harvest' in November. Candlestick Plant (*Senna alata*) along with other Senna species develop seed in pods or legumes which gradually change color from green to black or dark brown. The pods should be picked as soon as they darken in color and become brittle. Seed should be removed from the pods shortly thereafter. Many pods will yield an abundance of viable seeds while



Candlestick Plant (*Senna alata*)

others may be empty, diseased or already devoured by any number of small weevils or beetles. Seed can be pretreated to a warm water soak for 12-48 hours before sowing in a seed flat or pot. Germination is erratic but providing bottom heat to keep soil temperatures around 70 degrees will enhance emergence rates. Once germination of the seed is achieved, the seedlings grow quickly so schedule indoor sowing in February or March. In North Texas, seed can be sown directly in the garden from early May through June.

Candlestick Plant, Emperor's Candles or Empress Candle Plant (all common monikers for *Senna alata*) is a striking attraction in the landscape. Once a very in-fashion annual plant throughout Dallas, it began to lose favor in the nursery trade in the 1980s. Candlestick plant ranges from Africa, Southeast Asia, and tropical America but has been cultivated in South and Central Texas as a perennial herb. It is root hardy to 15 degrees F and drought tolerant once established.. It grows from 5 to 8 feet tall with a spread of 3 to 4 feet. The showy yellow erect flower spikes resembling 'candles' appear mid to late summer through autumn on plants located in full sun. To achieve the best flower production, Candlestick Plant requires sun throughout most of the day. The large pinnately compound leaves to 30" long lend a tropical appearance to the garden.

Candlestick plant has other qualities beyond its landscape attributes. It is an essential component of a butterfly habitat as a host plant for the Gray Hairstreak (*Strymon melinus*) and Cloudless Sulphur (*Phoebis sennae*). The larvae of the Cloudless Sulphur can feed either on the leaves and or the flower buds. This dual diet preference results in two color forms in the caterpillars, a yellow form and green form. The flowers are pollinated by bumblebees which exhibit 'buzz pollination' behavior in that they vibrate their thoracic flight muscles at a certain frequency to shake some of the pollen loose from the anthers. Candlestick plant flowers are also know to possess effective anti-fungal and anti-bacterial properties. In the past the leaves were used to treat ringworm.

Consider adding Candlestick plant to your habitat garden to attract the host-specific butterflies and the indigenous 'buzz' pollinators.



The yellow and green color forms of the caterpillar of the Cloudless Sulphur butterfly.



Spotlight on: Tailed Orange

(Pyrisitia proterpia)

The Tailed Orange is a seasonally and sexually dimorphic species. With a wingspan of 1 3/4 to slightly over 2 inches, this medium sized butterfly is difficult to miss due to its vibrant orange coloring and rapid flight. Summer forms have forewings bordered in black with prominent black veination and reduced hindwing protrusions. Winter individuals lack the black veins and have far more pronounced protrusions on the hindwings which resemble tails.

Despite what most popular field guides suggest, the Tailed Orange can be found in north Texas, although not with any great regularity. It has been recorded here from spring - fall. It's normal range is southern Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico, southward

through Mexico to Peru, as well as the Greater Antillies.

Members of the Fabaceae are used as host plants with Partridge Pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*) and Mesquite (*Prosopis sp.*) being used in Texas. In the more tropical parts of its range species of *Desmodium* are used as are various species of *Cassia*. Some of our local members of these last two genera may also be utilized. Careful observation of females in the wild, or collection of females for breeding experiments, would help answer these questions.

Opler and Warren (2002), moved this species from *Eurema* and placed it in *Pyrisitia* pointing to recent DNA analysis.



Male (dorsal)



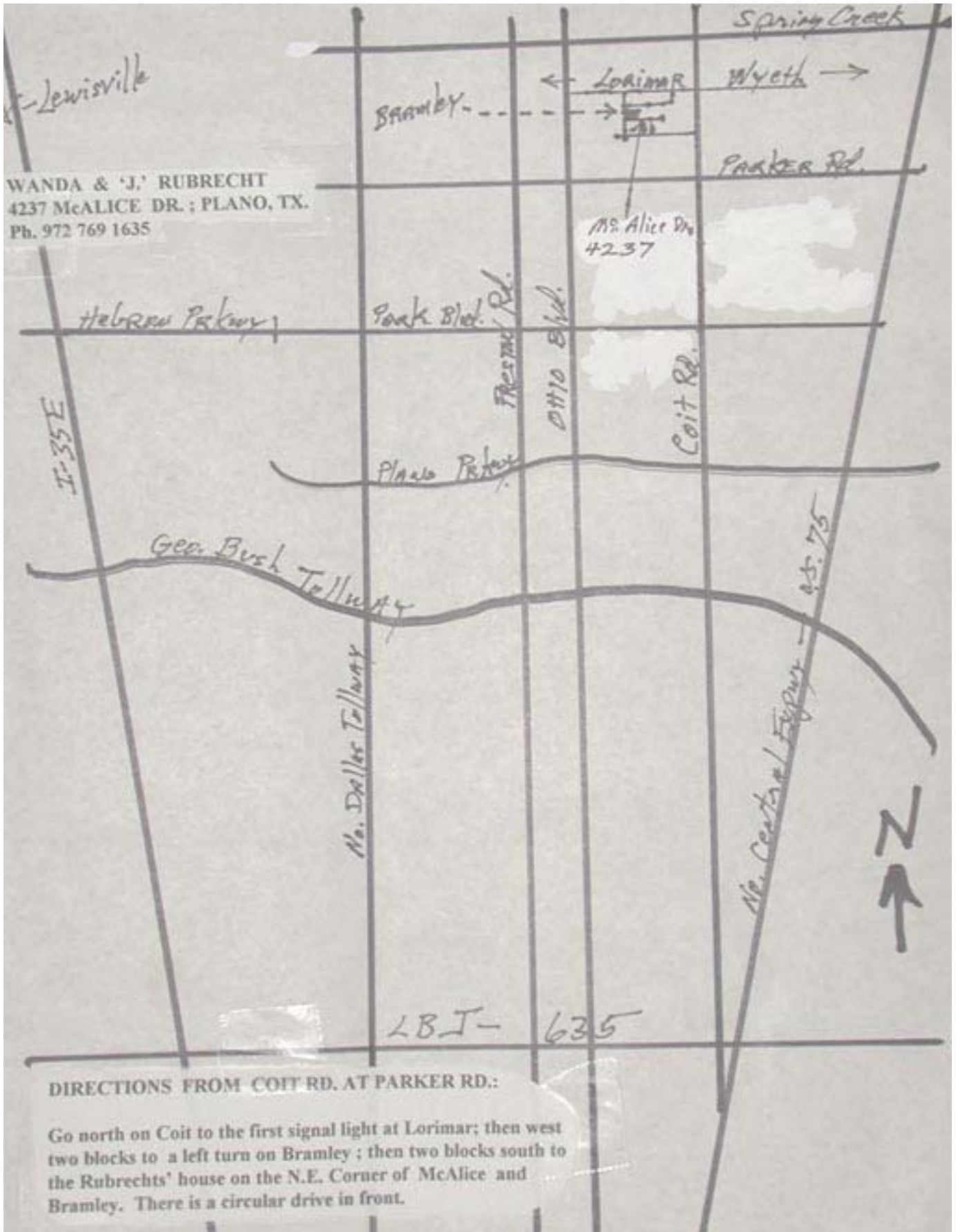
Female (dorsal)



Ventral



Summer Form



Trips to See the Overwintering Monarchs in Mexico

Below are listed the names and website links and/or email addresses for individuals who have led trips to the overwintering sites of the monarchs and who are planning such trips for 2004. These trips fill up fast so if you are interested NOW is the time to act.

Bill Calvert, Monarch Watch of Texas, Austin

<http://home.satx.rr.com/txento/calvert.htm>

wmcaltvert@sbcglobal.net

(512) 441-0387

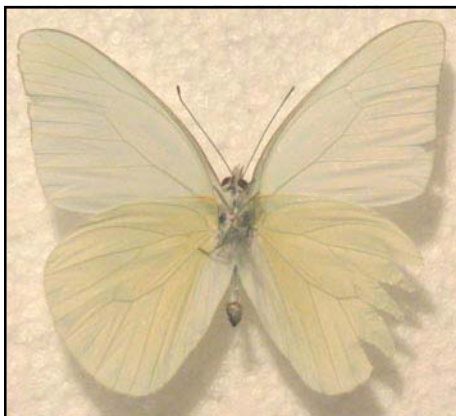
Nancy Greig, Cockrell Butterfly Center, Houston

ngreig@hmns.org

(713) 639-4678



Dorsal and ventral views of the Florida White (*Appias drusilla*) that was collected in Wise County, Texas.



Florida White (*Appias drusilla*) found in Wise, Co. TX

DCLS member Richard Fleischer, M.D. collected a Florida White at the LBJ Grasslands back in April of this year during our field trip. The meeting had already broken-up and Dr. Fleischer and Jack Carter were continuing to collect around “the hill” when the specimen was captured.

While it has been recorded for north Texas before this is yet another relatively uncommon species for the area. Its normal range is south Texas, New Mexico, Arizona southward to Brazil, the Caribbean and Florida.

The Florida White, like the Tailed Orange (see page 3), is a seasonally and sexually dimorphic species. It’s hostplants are members of the Capparidaceae, which include Cleome and Clammyweed.